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War Food Administration
Office of Distribution
Nutrition Programs Branch

Case History
of a
Nutrition Committee Activity

A COUNTY NUTRITION COMMITTEE INTRODUCES SCYBEANS. 1/

Calhoun County, W. Va., although tucked away in the Allegheny Mountains near the central part of the State, off a main highway, has felt the impact of the war as much as any other county and more than most. Before the war the population was about 12,000. Enlistments, the draft, and recruitment for war jobs in industrial plants in other parts of the State and in Ohio, have taken away 25 percent of the population. There are no foreign groups, and only two Negro families live in the county. With this exception, the people are native-born whites of Anglo-Saxon descent.

Nature has balanced the meager agricultural possibilities of Calhoun's hills and mountains by providing a resource of great importance. That is, natural gas and oil which yield income in the form of royalties to landowners and wages to those who labor at the wells and in the compression and pumping stations. Capital to develop and operate the wells is provided by one large company and several smaller ones.

Farming is on a small scale, largely of the subsistence type. Many are only part-time farmers. There is stock and poultry raising, but not much dairying. People in Grantsville, the small county-seat town, and in the few villages, as well as the rural dwellers, have gardens.

The county is not particularly progressive. People do not care about road improvement. There are few bridges. Many streams are crossed by foot bridges. Schools are of the one-room type except in Grantsville, where there is a grade school and county consolidated high school.

Religion throughout the county is Protestant. There is almost no religious leadership. An itinerant pastor serves churches of the county irregularly, and even the church in the county seat is served only two Sundays each month. However, there are Sunday schools with local leadership in most communities. Young people also have 4-H Clubs. The extension service has organized farm women's clubs and farm security encourages its borrower families to meet in groups to discuss problems and receive instructions.

1/ Information from an interview with Miss Abbie Russell, chairman of the Calhoun County, West Virginia, Nutrition Committee.

Family and community ties are strong. In town the oldest settlers tend to form cliques. They have the greatest prestige of any class.

Recreational facilities are meager. Sunday Schools, 4-H and farm women's club meetings, and a garden club in Grantsville provide about the only opportunity for social activities.

Ambitions of adults are centered in their families. They want a good living, are interested in their children, and are ambitious for their children to be successful.

The war has brought changes in attitudes and in ways of living. Horizons have been broadened by correspondence with relatives and friends who have left for military service or for war work. There is increased attention to news by radio and newspaper. People generally are working harder, and older people are working longer hours. Some mothers seem indifferent to what is happening in home and community due to intense interest in what is happening to their sons overseas.

One problem which has developed as a result of the war situation has been disruption of the usual pattern of food production and distribution, particularly in regard to meat. For generations the custom has been for farmers to raise meat animals, owned and furnished to them by town people. Meat produced under this plan is shared between farmer and townsman. The war interrupted this practice. Many farmers left the county for war jobs. Shortage of gasoline and tires prevented travel and trucking. The complexities of rationing regulations governing slaughter of farm animals for home use further hindered customary practices. People faced a shortage of meat which was more acute in town than in the country.

The county nutrition committee decided to introduce soybeans as a meat substitute to meet the emergency. The committee includes members who are representative of agencies and organizations that reach practically all families in the county. They are the home demonstration agent and county agent of the Extension Service, the high-school home-economics teacher, the county superintendent of schools and the principal of the consolidated high school, Farm Security Administration home supervisor, county public-health nurse, case worker of the Department of Public Welfare, Red Cross director, president of the garden club, and a physician.

People were receptive from the beginning because they recognized the campaign as an effort to help them in meeting a need created by the war emergency. All members on the committee assisted in planning the educational campaign which was necessary. The principal channels for reaching people were the farm women's clubs, 4-H Clubs, farm security groups, schools, and the garden club of Grantsville. Definite responsibilities were assigned to each committee member when the project was planned.

Objectives of the over-all campaign were similar for all, although various methods were used in reaching different groups:

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1. Against the background of the meat shortage, publicity was given to the food value of soybeans and soybean products as substitutes for meat.
2. As many people as possible were given an opportunity to taste appetizingly cooked foods prepared with soybeans and soybean products.
3. Samples of seeds for planting and soybean flour were given away. Enough soybean flour for one baking was packed in cellophane bags and given to women at club meetings by the home demonstration agent. The bags were also given to children at school.
4. Seed and flour were stocked by a leading grocery store and were on hand when the campaign started.
5. As many lay women and children as possible were given work to do toward carrying out the project.
6. Before beginning any cooking demonstrations, the home demonstration agent tried out recipes and practical baking, canning, sprouting beans, and making soybean milk. Local club members assisted.

Division of responsibility among professional workers, lay leaders, and volunteers was as follows:

1. The home demonstration agent, who is also chairman of the nutrition committee and the farm-security home supervisor arranged with a chain grocery store to stock soybeans and soybean products. Other stores were approached, but were either indifferent or could not obtain supplies.
2. The State extension nutritionist trained leaders at a county meeting on the preparation of soybean foods. These leaders gave demonstrations with the assistance of the home demonstration agent in seven farm women's clubs.
3. The home-economics teacher wrote articles for the county newspaper. The newspaper cooperated fully. The home-economics teacher also demonstrated the use of soy products in a foods class at the county 4-H Club camp.
4. Grade-school pupils prepared a window exhibit on soybeans and soybean products. Grantsville grade school served soybeans and baked products several times. A package of soy flour and recipes were given to each school in the county serving school lunches.
5. Three 4-H demonstration teams of seven girls gave demonstrations on sprouting soybeans from which salads were made. Sandwiches were also demonstrated using soybean flour bread. These teams demonstrated before 66 members of 8 clubs. Soybean flour was used by most of the 4-H girls taking food preparation projects. Soybeans and products made from soybean flour were served at the county 4-H camp.

6. Literature was widely distributed, especially recipes. The United States Department of Agriculture, State Extension Service, and the B. & O. Railroad furnished the literature.

7. School-lunch cooks were trained by the home demonstration agent to prepare foods made of soybeans for school meals.

Although the intensive campaign is over, the nutrition committee's interest in increasing the use of soybeans has continued. Evidence that the effort was successful is observed throughout the county. Workers who travel over the county report that soybeans are growing quite generally. Farm-security records show that 60 out of 100 families have adopted the growing and use of soybeans. Extension workers make a similar estimate for other families.

Only one obstacle prevented even greater success - the chairman of the nutrition committee became ill before all plans for which she had assumed responsibility had been carried through. It is now realized that the Sunday schools might also have been used as a channel for reaching more people.